

Article 146: A Few Questions About Religion – Part 1

Have you been disappointed when seeking genuine support and guidance through religion ...or a “spiritual” group? Do you find many of their beliefs and traditions difficult to understand, frequently contradictory, and almost impossible to live? Does it seem that these groups are made only for “believers” ...and not for outsiders in need of loving support and guidance; not for those who are skeptical and doubting ...or who are sincerely confused by modern life? Do you question much of what is written and presented as being “the truth of life” ...simply because the times, problems, and understandings when those “truths” were established were so different than today’s world? ...and the answers do not seem to apply to your problems? ...or to most of your questions? And does it appear that, in spite of their ardent faith and trust and beliefs, “bad things still happen to good people”? ...and wicked individuals seem to thrive? Ohh, certainly, you are told that all “wicked people will eventually be punished and good people will be saved”, but that doesn’t help you much right now, ...does it?

If your words and actions matter, when do they matter? When will you be rewarded for your goodness? ...and when will others be punished for their unfair or outright harmful actions? Life doesn’t really seem fair and just, ...does it? ...and it certainly doesn’t seem to offer any real goodness or benefits to “religious believers”, ...does it? It only seems to justify problems and difficulties as trials, tests, and lessons. Maybe religion doesn’t make any real difference ...or offer any true benefits, ...certainly not right now ...or in this lifetime! Do you feel that traditional religions apply to the times in which they were conceived, developed, practiced, and written about ...and are remote and meaningless today?

Are you really inspired by the rituals and ceremonies? ...by the examples of leaders who are “in charge”? ...or are you hoping that your faithful actions will bring some degree of relief from this hectic, seemingly meaningless life ...filled with problems, burdens, and illness? Does a serious infection or illness really teach you a lesson? Can you actually learn something worthwhile from that? How do you know? And how do you know what the lesson is? ...or what it is, in particular, for you? Are you really supposed to patiently and quietly endure your burdens and afflictions? And if your problems are punishment, ...what are you being punished for? ...and why are you being punished? What action was so “bad” to deserve such punishment? And if your illness is an inherited disease, ...is it fair to punish you for what some ancestor did centuries ago?

No loving father would ever punish his children in these ways, ...or make them endure years of punishment for a moment of thoughtlessness, ...especially not while concealing the reason for the punishment. Doesn’t it seem that you could easily create a better world? ...or a more-loving

world? ...one in which, if people are to be burdened and punished by adversity and illness, they would at least be informed about the charges against them? ...and if wicked people are to be supported, righteous people would be told "why"? What's all the secrecy about? Maybe life isn't fair! Maybe it is a far different picture than the one painted by religion. Maybe it is the religious interpretation of life which is unfair ...not life itself, ...could that be possible?

Does every thought and action, no matter how small and inconsequential, really matter? Can anyone actually survive such close scrutiny? And if God is so loving, why does it seem, from religious writers, that God is always watching and judging? Shouldn't a personal religion be more concerned with you and your desires ...and less concerned with controlling you to live as the religion dictates? What makes the religion so right ...and you so wrong? Is life really about forsaking your desires and ways for those of the religion? Maybe religion is only about religion and control ...and not about people. Could an unconditionally loving God ever judge you? And if such a God judges you, can that God, in that, be unconditionally loving? Doesn't God's anger and punishment reveal judgment, non-acceptance, and lack of forgiveness? Isn't there shallowness and hypocrisy in such actions? Where is the love and guidance ...and lack of judgment in all of this?

More questions will follow next week. Do you have any special questions on this subject which you'd like to share with others? If so, send them in.